Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

Albion Middle School 2755 East Newcastle Drive Sandy, Utah 84093

April 12-13, 2005



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Albion Middle School 2755 East Newcastle Drive Sandy, Utah 84093

April 12-13, 2005

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 12-13, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Albion Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Larry Odom is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Albion Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Albion Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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ALBION MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Larry Odom	Assistant Principal				
Counseling					
Nancy Ennenga					
Support Staff					
Rebecca Beddoes	Attendance Secretary				
Rebecca BeddoesLeah Funk					
Leah FunkCheryl Hart					
Leah Funk Cheryl Hart David Hawkins					
Leah Funk Cheryl Hart David Hawkins. Terilyn Moffett.	Media Coordinator General Secretary Head Custodian Lunch Manager				
Leah Funk Cheryl Hart David Hawkins Terilyn Moffett Cathy Parker	Media Coordinator General Secretary Head Custodian Lunch Manager Hall Monitor				
Leah Funk Cheryl Hart David Hawkins Terilyn Moffett Cathy Parker Judy Perkins	Media Coordinator General Secretary Head Custodian Lunch Manager Hall Monitor Registrar				
Leah Funk Cheryl Hart David Hawkins Terilyn Moffett Cathy Parker	Media Coordinator General Secretary Head Custodian Lunch Manager Hall Monitor Registrar Psychologist				

Faculty

John Adams Vicky Anderl Glade Bailey Anne Burt Kathleen Carlson Carla Carmain Leslie Cheesman Judi Christopherson Harvey Colby Megan Corrigan Heidi Elsasser Neiko Gilgen Bobette Glassett	Phyllis Griffiths Ann Hardman Lois Houston Maureen Howe Jacqueline Kinahan Kari Ann Larsen Preston Lloyd Pamela Loveridge Ken McLaughlin Jim Nielson Barbara North Greg Oldroyd Amy Olsen	Tavia Richards Jodi Richardson Courtney Roberts Lee Russell Sheri Sample Denny Saunders Denise Sidesinger Connie Simons Susan Slade Angela Stewart Amanda Teixeira Terilyn Walton Jillian Wessman
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ALBION MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Albion Middle School is to create a nurturing environment that:

- Develops character,
- Ignites the imagination, and
- Prepares minds for discovery

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Albion Middle School believes that all students can learn when provided with:

- High expectations
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
- Meaningful, engaging learning experiences
- Environment of collaboration
- Risk-free environment

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Paul O. Hansen, Olympus High School, Granite School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Debbie Andrews, Eisenhower Junior High School, Granite School District
Bess Brown, Eisenhower Junior High School, Granite School District
Mary Lane, Bonneville Junior High School, Granite School District
Lisa Tonge, Bonneville Junior High School, Granite School District
Trisha Udy, North Davis Junior High School, Davis County School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT ALBION MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER ONE: SCHOOL PROFILE

Albion Middle School is located in a middle- to upper-income area in Sandy City. The school was built in 1984 and serves approximately 1,100 students in the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades on a traditional schedule. The school is in the process of moving from the traditional junior high philosophy to embracing the middle school philosophy.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

Analysis of the data reveals incremental improvement in student performance on the State Core Assessments. While CRT mastery was delineated by gender, further disaggregation of additional data based on gender and ethnicity would assist the school in identifying specific student populations that may be in need of additional support. From discussion with the administration and faculty it is evident that they are using the data that has thus far been collected in implementation of their DRSLs and in aligning their resources to be used in implementing their desired results.

Albion Middle School conducted opinion surveys of students, parents and faculty members. The NSSE Opinion Inventories identified the following areas of concern about school climate:

- Problems with bullies at school
- A perception that students and staff are not always treated with respect
- *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

While DRSLs have been identified, as Albion Middle School moves forward with adoption of the middle school philosophy the DRSLs may need to be evaluated and amended, and additional ones may need to be added. The school should plan an ongoing assessment regarding its mission and desired outcomes to assess their relevance and effectiveness as the adoption of a middle school philosophy moves forward at Albion.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

 Building consensus among stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) will be critical to the successful adoption and implementation of a philosophical middle school plan that will drive both instruction and school direction. This plan should be clearly articulated with school-wide DRSLs, beliefs, resources, and mission statement. The adequacy of funding needs to be studied and resources aligned to aid in student success.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

According to the self-study and Visiting Team meetings with parents, students, and teachers, stakeholders were involved in the self-study to some degree. Focus groups were identified and contributed to the school's self-study. Focus group leaders provided direction and guidance as focus groups studied data and made recommendations aimed at successfully achieving the school mission and desired outcomes for student learning. Each focus group had interdepartmental representation. From the Visiting Team's visits with students it was clear that they understood the DRSLs and recognized when teachers were focusing on them in classroom instruction.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The school has earnestly striven to effectively assess its strengths and limitations. The Visiting Team found that there had been considerable effort among administrators, parents, and teachers in identifying strengths and limitations. Through visits with parents and department heads, the Visiting Team found that administrators, parents, and teachers have confidence in the school's ability and commitment to student achievement in a safe learning environment.

The work done by each department reflects significant effort to identify areas of strength and recommendations for growth. Each department identified its areas of strength and also formulated recommendations for growth. However, the individual departmental strengths and recommended growth areas are not clearly integrated into a broader, school-wide set of strengths and desired growth areas that are tied to the DRSLs and school goals noted in the school's self-study report.

The Visiting Team recognizes that the school and the leadership team made a sincere effort to do a thorough analysis of the school's strengths and limitations and commends them for this effort.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Albion Middle School's school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- 1. Learning-to-Learn Skills
- 2. Expanding and Integrating Knowledge
- 3. Communication Skills
- 4. Thinking and Reasoning Skills
- 5. Interpersonal Skills
- 6. Personal and Social Responsibility

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

There is strong evidence that the school engaged all stakeholders in developing a vision that not only gives a powerful sense of direction, but also reflects the prevalent educational beliefs of the entire learning community. The Albion Mission Statement and Beliefs Focus Group, comprised of students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators, developed the mission statement and beliefs. They incorporated principles and procedures from faculty meetings, School Community Council meetings, and the school improvement team. Additionally, surveys were given to students and parents to include their perspective. This original document was presented to all stakeholders for revision and/or adoption. The mission statement addresses the importance of creating an environment conducive to learning, building good character, and preparing the mind for individual growth and discovery.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

The school culture gives students the confidence and expectations to be high achievers. Students respond by performing at that level and experiencing academic success. Albion Middle School realizes that continual self-reflection and assessment are vital for ongoing growth and improvement. The school is embracing the middle school philosophy, which will facilitate more collaboration and meaningful learning experiences. They have responded to the issue of "bullying" that was reflected in the NSSE surveys. The Visiting Team witnessed a great deal of commitment to academic excellence and student achievement not only from the administration and staff, but also from the entire school community.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

Albion Middle School's DRSLs correlate with the mission statement and beliefs, especially as they are further defined through the indicators. The DRSLs expand the beliefs, giving them specific detail and greater depth. Although the DRSLs are measurable, detailed techniques or procedures for incorporating them into instructional strategies or assessing them are not clearly defined.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The Visiting Team commends the staff at Albion Middle School in its efforts to work collaboratively to ensure that the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum.

Staff members create opportunities to get together and share ideas during informal times. More collaboration takes place during formal department meetings. Although time provided within the school day to collaborate on curricula is rare, staff members are commended for their efforts to carve out time to share ideas, coordinate curricula, plan, and implement the action plan. In addition, all staff members have been trained in using the Six Traits of Writing, and several departments have implemented the use of that program. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue its efforts in this area.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The Visiting Team commends the staff members for the way they have embraced the desired results for student learning. The DRSLs have been identified and the staff has come to consensus on the importance of the DRSLs in the classroom. The DRSLs are posted in each classroom and staff members are committed to incorporating them into every aspect of the curriculum.

Students are aware of the DRSLs and how the DRSLs relate to the classroom experience. Members of the Community Council and the PTSA are also aware of the DRSLs and embrace their importance.

Although staff members have been encouraged to relate their own curricula to the DRSLs and recognize the importance of doing so, there is little evidence to suggest

that the DRSLs are a focus in collaboratively developing curricula. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue to work collaboratively whenever possible and not only implement the DRSLs into their respective curricula, but use the DRSLs as a driving force in developing curricula and explicitly teaching to those outcomes.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

Albion Middle School has a highly qualified staff and administrative team that seem to collaborate and work well together. A variety of learning strategies were observed, including lecture, group activities and group instruction, student presentations, simulations, personal coaching, and several other strong teaching methods. Learning activities were suited to the content areas and specific lessons.

Random students were interviewed by each of the Visiting Team members. They reported that as they go through the school day they experience a variety of teaching strategies. Designing alternative ways of assessing student work, especially as it relates to the DRSLs, will enhance student engagement and achievement.

With the adoption of the DRSLs, the course curricula will require modification to increase the number of learning experiences that incorporate the DRSLs into the curriculum.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

The faculty at Albion Middle School has given serious attention to the need to recognize and meet the range of student learning styles that are encountered in every classroom. The Visiting Team suggests that additional time be created to allow the faulty to research and expand the use of multiple teaching strategies and instructional delivery options to meet the variety of needs of all students through the use of differentiated instruction.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The Visiting Team commends the faculty at Albion for creating before- and afterschool tutoring for any student that is need of special help. In visits with students and parents, appreciation was expressed for the additional help. The Visiting Team noted that there was special attention given to students who excel in the arts, allowing students to not only express their creative talents in fine art but to also demonstrate their talents in performing arts.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

Each teacher at Albion Middle School has developed periodic assessments to determine mastery of course concepts, based on the Utah State Core. These assessments often go beyond the traditional methods of testing. Focus group reports articulate the use of peer assessments, interactive journals, PowerPoint presentations, creative writing, and hands-on cooperative labs, which complement the traditional methods. Rubrics for assignments make students aware of the high standards for work, and much of this work is displayed throughout the building. The Visiting Team determined that school-wide assessments are left primarily to the district or state. For example, all staff members have been trained in the Six Traits of Writing. However, this program has not yet been implemented throughout each department. One of the action steps to facilitate student learning is to develop uniform departmental assessments. The Visiting Team encourages the staff to begin this process, as well as develop school-wide assessments for student achievement.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

Several departments at Albion Middle School utilize pre-tests to determine student needs in developing their curricula and post-tests to evaluate the effectiveness. The Visiting Team observed class objectives written on the board in some classrooms. Not only are the students aware of these objectives, they are also aware of the DRSLs and how they correlate to the class objectives.

According to the NSSE survey, only 27 percent of the students saw a correlation between what they were studying and the use of it in their everyday lives. The Visiting Team suggests the implementation of more authentic assessment activities in the classrooms.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

In talking with students and parents, it was evident that a large majority felt that they were being tested on material that was taught. The Visiting Team listened to numerous positive reports as to the effectiveness of the tutoring program already in place and the willingness of teachers to re-teach or give extra help when needed. Some of the teachers at Albion are aware of the need to assess different levels of specific performance standards, and have implemented a layered curriculum format.

The Visiting Team feels it is not clearly stated in the self-study what help is available for the small number of students who are at risk.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?
 - Albion Middle School has a strong leadership team. Administrators, group leaders, and Community Council members are actively engaged in fostering a safe and effective learning environment. There is a culture of high expectations for students and staff. The school maintains a constant and steady focus on student learning. The administrative team researches and collaborates on school-wide needs and involves teachers, parents, and students in developing appropriate action aimed at enhancing student leadership.
- b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?
 - Most decisions are aligned with the school's beliefs, mission, and goals. The Visiting Team, following interviews with teachers, parents, and students, concluded that there was a general feeling that these stakeholders had a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the direction of the school. Many of the school's decisions related to instructional goals have been made according to data from the school surveys. The Visiting Team suggests that particular attention be given to the departmental analyses' recommended areas of growth, as those growth areas relate to school-wide goals, DRSLs, and the mission.
- c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?
 - The leadership continually monitors student progress. The Visiting Team recommends that members of the school leadership team continue to study data and look for additional data that will assist them in making decisions that foster student achievement and are aligned with the school's desired outcomes. The development of a comprehensive assessment using researched-based data to drive future instructional decisions, particularly as Albion moves to a middle school-based instructional philosophy, will help ensure continued student achievement and instructional success.
- d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The leadership of Albion Middle School provides skillful stewardship of the school. Most school wide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school beliefs and mission, and are designed to maximize opportunities for successful learning. Available resources are aligned with school goals. Parents, students, and staff members responded positively to the Visiting Team regarding the school climate and culture that have been provided by the school leadership.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The school leadership team works hard to foster a learning community of adults that emulate the efforts to establish a learning environment for students in the classroom. The Visiting Team commends the leadership team at Albion for progressive and effective use of the school's resources.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The school actively engages parents and families as partners in the learning process through a variety of programs, resources, and instructional materials. The administration is encouraged to continue building knowledge, skills, and expertise in the faculty to employ data-driven and researched-based decision-making that will serve to enhance school improvement over the long term.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

The Visiting Team recognizes the many positive and productive relationships that exist among students, teachers, support staff, parents, and administrators. There is strong evidence that the school supports, promotes, and fosters ways in which students can succeed within the classroom and beyond. There are mentoring programs, tutoring resources, and teacher availability. Students feel they belong to a caring community.

The Visiting Team also recognizes that although there is no allotted time for collaboration, many teachers are using their own time to initiate this process. The Visiting Team encourages the faculty to continue and expand this initiative, but recommends investigating ways in which effective collaboration time within departments and across the curriculum can be scheduled.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

The Visiting Team recognizes the strong support from the parents and the surrounding community, and that this climate nurtures academic success. There are collaborative networks among the teachers, parents, feeder schools' parents and teachers, and businesses that do extend beyond the classroom. These established networks positively contribute to the successful learning environment of the school via time volunteered, available grants, and/or business support.

There is strong evidence that students feel teachers are approachable, caring, and helpful. There is also strong evidence that teachers respond promptly to parents' inquiries. However, the Visiting Team would continue to encourage the expansion of effective parent and teacher communications not only with regard to new students, but with all students.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The Visiting Team commends the staff for its commitment to professional development even though no time is provided for staff development during the school week. Staff members at Albion Middle School have participated in training for a number of programs as part of its professional development program. These programs are designed to be effective across the curriculum and reach all teachers and students.

The Visiting Team recommends that future professional development focus on the school's goals for improvement, and that the programs currently in place be aligned with those goals.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The administration is to be commended for developing a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. Teachers, parents, and members of the Community Council and PTSA expressed feelings that the administration is receptive to new ideas. There is a strong level of dedication, support, and commitment among the administration and staff to productive change and improvement.

The staff is to be commended for its commitment to productive change. Over the past four years, seventy-five staff members have attended twenty-four conferences.

Every member of the staff has participated in the accreditation process, and all have a desire to work together to focus on student learning and school-wide reform.

The Visiting Team believes that the process of this accreditation self-evaluation and report has been valuable to the school community. It is evident that it has helped to build and strengthen relationships, collaboration, and trust within the faculty and between the staff and administration

The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue to find time to collaborate and share information both inter- and intra-departmentally.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressed in the critical areas for follow-up?

The Visiting Team found that Albion Middle School's action plan was a direct result of analyses of school data gathered and the departmental and focus groups' reports. The administration, teachers, and staff, including students and parents, were honest in the assessment of their strong and weak areas. The Albion faculty and administration are focused and devoted to enhancing student achievement. This commitment is reflected in the school's action plan.

As a result of the NSSE student, parent and teacher opinion inventories, Albion Middle School identified the following areas of concern about school climate:

- Problems with bullies at the school
- Perception that students and staff are not always treated with respect

The school has adequately addressed these issues in its action plan. The action plan also notes that as a result of the data, the school plans to research best practices as related to middle school effectiveness and middle level student achievement. The action plan for implementation of new information is somewhat vague, specifically on how this will be done. While faculty collaboration is noted in Albion's action

steps, there will need to be specific time carved out of the regular schedule to facilitate the process. The Visiting Team recommends that the school create an "early release day" for students allowing teachers time to research, study, and share information that will help Albion achieve its noted goal of "increasing learning through collaboration among stakeholders." Follow-up planning and action steps will need to be created as new ideas and practices are implemented.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

Commitment is strong to implementing the current identified action plan. One teacher, expressing the feelings of her department, remarked to the Visiting Team, "This is our plan and we have put forth a lot of work to get this far. We believe our direction will make a difference in the success of our students."

The Albion Middle School faculty and administration are progressive in their efforts and are committed to a climate of collaboration and continuous improvement.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

Albion Middle School's action plan lists specific assessment details related to their continuous implementation. These details may need to be added to and enhanced as implementation of the action steps moves forward.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the administration, teachers, staff, students, and community of Albion Middle School for their high expectations for students. Students are succeeding as measured by State CRT results. Students in classes are engaged in meaningful learning.
- The Visiting Team commends the strong community support that is unmistakable at Albion Middle School.
- The Visiting Team commends the teaching staff for its openness to change, for the good collaboration among teachers, and for their willingness to spend one-on-one time with kids. Teacher to parent response time is very good.

- The Visiting Team commends Albion on a very positive fine arts and performing arts program and the variety of good elective choices for students.
- The Visiting Team commends the hard work to put the DRSLs in place, and the school's efforts to help students and parents understand them (newsletters, PTSA meeting minutes, Community Council meetings, having students memorize the DRSLs).
- The Visiting Team commends Albion Middle School for a very positive school climate. The school is very attractive, clean, well maintained, and inviting. There were good displays of student work throughout the building.
- The Visiting Team commends the strong administrative leadership evident at Albion Middle School, including the development and successful implementation of a "Bullying Program."

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that as Albion Middle School moves forward with its school improvement plan, the information in the self-study needs to address some of the problems that were identified in the data (i.e., who is failing and why, what the will school do to address non-achieving students).
- The Visiting Team recommends the development of effective transitions for students coming from 6th grade to 7th grade.
- The Visiting Team recommends that a uniform rubric be designated to assess the effectiveness of established DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Albion continue to strengthen methods of
 effective communication between school and parents, especially with parents of
 students new to the school.